Internal Security : Countering Terror (In India) – A Brief Overview

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Introduction

India has been combating terrorism in many forms since its Independence in 1947. The types of terror attacks range from thinly disguised attacks to anonymous bomb attacks to armed attacks by gunmen. The culmination was the Mumbai Attacks in 2008 on 26/11. Such terror attacks in the hinterland of the nation, far away from the borders/line of control, were dealt with by the national internal intelligence agency, the Intelligence Bureau and the state police.

Counter-terror involves the preventive phase wherein intelligence is built up to pre-empt and stop any terror attack from developing. Then there is the protective phase which would run concurrently with the preventive phase. The protective phase involves the measures taken to ensure the safety of the site or installation or geographical areas such as perimeter fencing, CCTV surveillance, access control, initial response and so on. Finally, there is the reactive phase. This is the phase where the responders react to contain and resolve the terror attack. Then there is the investigative aspect of the reactive phase, so essential to pinpoint and track the perpetrators and the brains behind the attack, eventually leading to prosecution and conviction in the court of law and enabling prevention of future attacks.

Internal Security – Under India's Federal System

Under the Indian Constitutional Federalism, law and order which covers Internal Security and thereby counter-terror actions comes under the purview of the states. Thus we see a collection of myriad approaches in dealing with terrorism. Each state has developed its own approach and the Union Government is hard pressed to develop some commonality amongst the various federated states.

In cases where the Internal Security situation grew to proportions beyond the capability of the state police, the Army was called in, with the accompanying declaration of the affected area as 'disturbed' with the troops functioning under the legal protection of the much maligned Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). From the legal point of view, the Armed Forces cannot operate or undertake counter-terror actions as they are not empowered as the police are, under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

But, as Mumbai 26/11 showed, the Army cannot be deployed everywhere. Further, the Army is not specifically equipped to operate in an environment where collateral damage and civilian casualties are bound to occur. Finally, National Security Guard (NSG), the Federal Counter Terror organisation, was requisitioned to deal with the situation in Mumbai. However, they were requisitioned tardily and then needed time to familiarise themselves with the target areas and plan the search and clearance operations, thus it took nearly 60 hours before the terrorists could be liquidated. The entire incident highlighted the complete unpreparedness of the state police to respond to terror situations. It was very unfortunate considering that a copy book precedent was available in the Akshardham case where two terrorists attacked the Akshardham Temple in Gandhinagar (Ahmedabad) at around 4 pm on 24 September 2002. The state's swift response and timely requisition of NSG resulted in containment of the incident and speedy resolution of the incident in a little over 12 hours.

The Centre/Union and many States have created disaster response mechanisms such as National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and their equivalents in the states. However, these mechanisms would be hard pressed to deal with terror related disturbances as terror strikes bring in the aspect of heightened vulnerability of victims and responders as compared to a non-terror disaster where the responders can attend to the victims and the situation without having to worry about secondary or continuing terror attacks.

Internal Security – the Centre's Response

Coping with the federated system of states' responsibility for law and order, the Central Government through Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has set in place a number of initiatives to deal with counter-terrorism. These are discussed below :-

(a)   Appointing a Military Adviser, of the rank of Brigadier, in MHA.

(b)   Appointing Mr Vijay Kumar, retired DG of CRPF, as Special Security Adviser in the MHA.[1]

(c)   Enunciating a Crisis Management Plan (CMP) and periodically updating/revising it.[2]

(d)   Enhancing funds for the Modernisation of State Police Forces (MPF) Programme. Under this Non-Plan scheme, assistance is being provided, inter-alia, for procurement of modern equipment for surveillance, communications, forensic science laboratories, weaponry, vehicles, computerisation, training infrastructure and for construction of Police infrastructure viz., Housing/Police stations/out posts/barracks etc. All the north eastern States are eligible to receive 100 per cent central assistance of their approved annual plan for modernisation of Police force. In the 2015 Budget central assistance for National Scheme for Modernisation of Police and Other Forces will cease. In the spirit of "Cooperative Federalism" Government has accepted the recommendations of Fourteenth Finance Commission to devolve 42 per cent of Union Taxes to States. To achieve the compositional shift in fiscal transfer as envisaged by Fourteenth Finance Commission, Central Assistance to State Plan has been restructured and Union/Central support will be delinked for some programmes having been made a part of devolution or States may or may not continue with these programmes.[3]

(e)   Setting up of Counter-Insurgency and Anti-Terrorist Schools (CIATSs): During the 11th Plan period a scheme was planned to set up 20 CIAT Schools, four each in the States of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand

and Orissa to train police personnel in combating terrorism/naxalism. The MHA would provide an amount of Rs 1.5 Crores to each school for development of temporary infrastructure. The Ministry would also bear recurring expenditure towards honorarium to be paid to the trainers. The land for these schools would be provided by the concerned State Governments which would also provide administrative support for running the CIAT Schools and necessary training equipment like weapons, ammunition, supporting manpower etc.[4]

(f)   Upgrading capabilities of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in terms of equipment, training infrastructure and training. In Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), it has created special Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA)[5] and ensuring that all new battalions are counter-terror capable instead of the traditional law and order and riot control roles. Large numbers of military veterans have been contracted as trainers and, bomb detection and disposal (BDD) experts. CRPF has set up a CoBRA School of Jungle Warfare and Tactics (CSJWT) at Belgaum (Karnataka), Intelligence Institute in Gurgaon (Haryana), the Institute of IED management in Pune (Maharashtra), and two CIATs.

(g) Employing NSG's training capacity to further enhance states' counter-terror capabilities in BDD and intervention.[6]

(h) Counter-Terror Exercises.

(j) Arranging foreign training, in the USA and other countries and in-country, for central and state police personnel.[7]

(k) Setting up of National Investigative Agency (NIA) and the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), the latter still a work in progress.

Internal Security – the States' Counter-Terror Responses

Counter-terror response would encompass terror incident management which would include various aspects as discussed in the subsequent paras.

(a)   **State Level Security Committee.** This would be on the lines of the Union Government's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and would comprise important cabinet ministers. Only some states have formally created such a committee.

(b)   **State Crisis Management Group (SCMG).** SCMG would be constituted from the Administrators – Secretaries of various departments and senior intelligence and police hierarchy. Many states have set up this committee, more from a disaster point of view.

(c)   **State Internal Security Organisation(s).** These are meant to cover aspects of counter-terror intelligence and response. In some states a counter-terror intelligence subsidiary has been created within the traditional intelligence agency leading to synergy in intelligence activity. In some other states the Internal Security Division (ISD) has the responsibility for counter-terror intelligence with the complications of overlapping jurisdiction between the traditional intelligence agency and jurisdictional (district and city) police units. The important aspect of post-incident investigation and prosecution has received mixed attention. Where jurisdictional police have the responsibility there is immediate action but not very focussed long term attention. In cases where it is the responsibility of the state nodal internal security element the long term investigation and pan-national linkages receive due attention. In Karnataka, ISD has been made a state-wide special police station with powers of investigation and prosecution/filing of FIR in specific terror related provisions of the IPC and other legal provisions.[8]

(d)   **State Counter-Terror Response (Special) Units – Naxal and Urban.** Many states have created and maintained special response units to deal with high levels of militancy/insurgency such as the famous and reputed Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh, Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) of Karnataka, C-60 (Commando 60) of Maharashtra, Jharkhand Jaguars, Tamil Nadu Special Police, Kerala's Thunderbolts[9]; and so on. Till 2007, Urban Counter Terror operations were the expertise domain of the federal counter-terror unit NSG. Mumbai 26/11 highlighted the need for states to develop their own urban counter-terror capability. Thereafter, many states have developed and some are in the process of developing urban counter-terror special response units. Some states have taken assistance from the Armed Forces veterans while Karnataka has opted to avail of the services of a serving Army Officer to create a counter-terror capability in terms of training and operational units.

(e)   **State Counter-Terror Response Mechanism.** Some states, such as Karnataka, have evolved a formal counter-terror response mechanism which lays down responsibilities of various stakeholders in the event of a terror situation. Further, robust protocols have been developed such as Incident Command Post for each incident with appropriate support structure. Periodic Counter-Terror Mock Drills (CTMD) ensure counter-terror preparedness of all concerned stakeholders and responders.

        Some of states that took the lead in developing this capability are Maharashtra, the then united Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Their approaches are quite different. These are enumerated

below :-

(a)   **Maharashtra** set up the state police's counter-terror response force 'Force One' after 26/11 (2008). The Force is based in Mumbai with Counter-Terror teams deployed across nodal towns across the state. Intelligence gathering was left to the traditional agencies.[10]

(b)   **Andhra Pradesh** set up the Organisation for Counter-Terror Operations 'OCTOPUS' on 1st October 2007. The organisation was mandated with both counter-terror intelligence and response but subsequently responsibility

for intelligence was hived off to the traditional intelligence agencies.11

(c)	**Karnataka** set up the ISD as early as 12 Dec 2008, barely a fortnight after Mumbai 26/11. ISD's mandate was focussed on counter-terror intelligence and it later developed a response capability. However, jurisdictional issues continue to cloud intelligence operations. After setting up the state counter-terror training centre 'Centre for Counter Terrorism (CCT) and the state response force 'Garuda Force'; it is now focussing on creating counter-terror response capabilities in each police unit in the districts, city commisionerates and state (armed) reserve police battalions.12

(d)	**Other States** such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Delhi have developed some reasonable counter-terror response mechanisms with creation and deployment of counter-terror response forces in the state capitals and in nodal cities across the state.

Most State Police units are grappling with issue of quality leadership for counter-terror special units. Counter-terror requires a modification of police style leadership with more on the lines of military leadership wherein senior and middle level leaders are engaged in hands-on leadership roles. In the Indian police environment the various levels of hierarchy are quite distinct with Indian Police Service (Regular/Direct) being on the top, followed by the state promotees to IPS and the lower levels. Inspectors are the cutting edge of day-to-day police functions with the higher levels engaged in administrative, supervisory and guidance roles. Two states that have IPS (Regular/Direct) officers directly involved with the Special Counter-Terror units are Maharashtra and erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh. The dividends in terms of manning, equipping and operational preparedness are evident to any analyst. Karnataka has benefitted by obtaining the services of a senior serving officer of the rank of Brigadier, who as Director of ISD's Centre for Counter Terrorism (CCT), is responsible for counter-terror training and operational preparedness of the state's special counter-terror unit, Garuda Force.

Conclusion

In the current heightened Internal Security situation and likely threat scenario it is imperative that all central and state police forces develop enhanced counter-terror capability. Special counter-terror response units must be created to ensure that terror incidents are combated with modern and effective counter-terror methods ranging from sourcing of motivated manpower, modern weapons and equipment, supported by sound tactics and response mechanisms. Terrorists must know that their actions will attract swift and professional response thereby, shrinking the windows for their success.

Endnotes

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5.	http://crpf.nic.in/CoBRA.htm accessed on 01 August 2015

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10.	http://zeenews.india.com/news/maharashtra/maharashtras-force-one-only-for-counter-terror-activities_583414.html accessed on 01 August 2015

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12.	http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140604/nation-current-affairs/article/home-minister-inaugurates-centre-counter-terrorism-kudlu and http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/commando-teams-to-be-set-up-in-all-districts/article6080490.ece, both accessed on 01 August 2015

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